DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 426 EA 020 139

AUTHOR Clark, David L.; Astuto, Terry A.
TITLE The Implications for Educational Research of a Changing Federal Educational Policy. Occasional Paper No. 4.
INSTITUTION University Council for Educational Administration.
PUB DATE Jun 87
NOTE 42p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Assessment; *Educational Policy; *Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Government; Federal Programs; *Government Role; Government School Relationship; *Politics of Education; Research and Development; Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Department of Education; Reagan Administration

ABSTRACT

Dramatic changes in the direction of federal educational policy have occurred since the Reagan administration took office in 1980. This document examines the changes that are taking place and will continue to occur in the emerging policy stance of this administration toward educational research. The thesis is that a form of the "new federalism" in educational policy is in the process of becoming institutionalized, and that a bipartisan consensus has emerged in support of a diminished federal role and an expanded state role in education. This trend toward devolution is likely to dominate educational policy development for the remainder of this century. The implications of these recent shifts in federal education policy for educational research are explored through two basic arguments. The first is that the federal educational research policy agenda evolves from two complementary bases: (1) the stated agenda (research and development emphases articulated by the administration); and (2) the derivative agenda (emphases occasioned by non-research-related policy actions including overarching social policies, substantive educational interests, and the effects of federal policy shifts on policy development at the state and local level. The second argument is that the changes in the federal educational research agenda will have significant implications for both the educational research community and the future of educational research. The gainers will include the census function, outcomes assessment, and dissemination, while losers are basic and applied research and regional laboratories and research and development centers. Twenty-nine references are included. (TE)

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THE IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

of

A CHANGING FEDERAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY

David L. Clark
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia

Terry A. Astuto
Teachers College
Columbia University

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EA020139

A publication of the Policy Studies Center of the University Council for Educational Administration

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A publication of the Policy Studies Center of the University Council for Educational Administration: Ruffner Hall 194, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

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Prefatory Note

The UCEA Policy Studies Center has been documenting accurately, analyzing, and predicting (with mixed success) the changes in federal educational policy that have occurred since President Reagan assumed office in January 1981. Sources for the documentation have been (a) official governmental publications, (b) periodical coverage of federal and state educational policy by the general and educational press, (c) publications of policy analysts and agencies, (d) research studies of the effects of federal educational policy on state and local education agencies, (e) structured interviews with Washington-based informants in the executive and legislative branches of the federal government and in the professional associations, and (f) opinion polls of public attitudes toward educational policy and related areas.

Other occasional papers issued through the UCEA Policy Studies Center include:

- The Significance and Permanence of Changes in Federal Educational Policy: 1980 - 1988 (January 1986);
- The Effects of Federal Education Policy Changes on Policy and Program Development in State and Local Education Agencies (March 1986);
- An Analysis of Public Support for the Educational Policy Preferences of the Reagan Administration (December, 1986);
- A Comparison of Educational Policy Options under Consideration Prior to and After 1980 (Forthcoming).

David L. Clark
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia

Terry A. Astuto
Teachers College
Columbia University

Introduction

New directions in federal educational policy after 1980 should not have come as a surprise to the educationist community. Prior to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, the Republican platform identified a clear framework for the "new federalism." Departing distinctly from the problem solving, interventionist stance of the "War on Poverty" or the "Great Society", the new domestic policy posture had devolution and diminution as its hallmarks. On the one hand, authority and responsibility for domestic policy and program development would be transferred from federal to state and local levels. Concurrently, the economic aims of the Administration would be attained, i.e., reducing expenditures, cutting taxes, controlling the money supply, and reallocating budgetary priorities.

Changes in Federal Educational Policy: 1980-1987

While the educationist community has concerned itself primarily with the loss of dollars for education, the major policy shift in education has occurred through devolution. The consequence of devolution for federal policy and programs in education is the maintenance of a visible presence without operational responsibilities by offering advice, counsel, support, encouragement, and exhortation to those who have operational responsibility - parents, local communities, and state governments.

The Reagan Administration has been consistent and persistent in communicating these procedural policy preferences. For example, President Reagan observed:

American schools don't need vast new sums of money as much as

they need a few fundamental reforms.... We must restore parents and state and local governments to their rightful place in the educational process. Education begins at home, where it is a parental right and responsibility. Decisions about discipline, curriculum, and academic standards - the factors that make a school good or bad - shouldn't be made by people in Washington. They should be made at the local level by parents, teachers, and administrators in their own communities. (Reagan, 1984, pp. 14-15).

This Administration also has a set of substantive educational policy preferences. And, again we can turn to President Reagan in his State of the Union Address (1984):

We must do more to restore discipline to the schools; and we must encourage the teaching of new basics, reward teachers of merit, enforce standards, and put our parents back in charge. I will continue to press for tuition tax credits to expand opportunities for families, and to soften the double payment for those paying public school taxes and private school tuition. Our proposal would target assistance to low and middle income families. Just as more incentives are needed within our schools, greater competition is needed among our schools. Without standards and competition there can be no champions, no records broken, no excellence - in education or any other walk of life. And while I'm on the subject - each day your members observe a 200 year old tradition meant to signify America is one nation under God. I

must ask: If you can begin your day with a member of the clergy standing right here to lead you in prayer, then why can't freedom to acknowledge God be enjoyed again by children in every schoolroom across this land. (State of the Union Address, 1984, p. 91)

These educational policy preferences are markedly different than those of the pre-Reagan years. Even a cursory review of the dominant lexicon of terms that controlled the pre- and post-Reagan eras demonstrates the scope of the change that has occurred.

Table 1

Terms That Characterize the Federal Educational Policy Stance Before and After 1980

Lexicon of Terms	
Pre-1980	Post-1980 Equivalent
1. Equity	1a. Excellence; standards of performance
2. Needs and access	2a. Ability; selectivity; minimum standards
3. Social and welfare concerns	3a. Economic and productivity concerns
4. Common school	4a. Parental choice; institutional competition
5. Regulations, enforcement	5a. Deregulation
6. Federal interventions	6a. State and local initiatives
7. Diffusion of innovations	7a. Exhortation; information sharing

Table 2 summarizes the changes in federal education policy that occurred in Reagan's first term. During much of its first two years, educational policy activities were dominated by procedural considerations, i.e., disestablishment (elimination of the Department of Education), deregulation, decentralization, deemphasis (reduction of the position of education as a priority on the federal agenda), and diminution. The

Administration asserted less specific substantive goals than its policy preferences now reflect, but its beliefs about the state of education were made clear in numerous public utterances:

- Public education is failing; mediocre at best, ineffective at worst.
- The federal presence in education has made a bad situation worse. Federal intervention has removed the action from the state and local levels where the problems must be solved.
- Federal regulations are an unnecessary burden on state and local educational officials. They are contributing to the failure of the field;
- Federal involvement in education has been misdirected, i.e., emphasizing social and welfare concerns rather than educational performance.

The publication of A Nation at Risk in 1983 provided a vehicle for the Administration to articulate its substantive policy preferences in a formal fashion. These substantive directions in policy have been reiterated, expanded upon, and refined over the past four years. The current agenda of the Administration is consistent with the procedural policy preferences of devolution and diminution but, as is illustrated in Table 3, extends into the substantive dimensions of education in which the President has a strong personal interest.

This context of the comprehensive agenda of change in federal educational policy is a necessary tool to examine the changes that are taking place and will continue to occur in the emerging policy stance of the Administration in regard to educational research.

Table 2

The Reagan First Term: Changes in Federal Educational Policy - 1981-84

YEAR	HALLMARK	ACTIONS	EFFECTS
1981	Rescissions Reductions	• Cumulative education budget cuts of over twenty percent	• Establishing the expectations for less (diminution)
1982	Block grant	• Implementation of E.C.I.A.	• Dismantling the categorical programs (disestablishment, decentralization)
	Deregulation	• Revocation of regulations	• Constraining ED from the design of educational interventions (disestablishment, decentralization)
		• Constraint of enforcement of regulations	• Moving accountability to the state level (deregulation, decentralization)
1983	Report of the National Commission on Excellence	• Publication of A Nation at Risk	• Moving from a focus on equity to excellence
		• Support for the design of career ladders for teachers and other forms of merit pay	• Focusing improvement strategies on adjusting standards (decentralization)
		• Encouragement of upward adjustment of standards	• Reducing the role of the educationist in school improvement
		• National Forum on Education	• Increasing educational policy activity at the state level (decentralization)
1984	Awards and Recognition	• Secondary School Recognition Program	• Developing consensus on direction of reform
		• Academic Fitness Awards	• Highlighting reform already underway (disestablishment, decentralization)
		• Excellent Private Schools Program	• Recognizing established performance
		• National Distinguished Principals Program	

Table 3

Educational Agenda of the Reagan Administration 1985-88

Policy Preference	Supporting Actions (taken or proposed)
1. Institutional Competition: (breaking the monopoly of the public school to stimulate excellent performance)	- Tuition tax credits - Vouchers - School awards programs - "Wall chart": monitoring state educational achievements
2. Individual Competition: (recognizing excellence to stimulate excellence	- Merit pay, career ladders for teachers - Academic fitness program - Awards to teachers and principals - Eligibility for post secondary scholarships, fellowships, loans
3. Performance Standards: (increasing minimum standards for teachers and students)	- Increased credit requirements for high school graduation - Proficiency examinations in addition to course requirements - Competency tests for teachers - Modified admission and certification standards for teachers
4. Focus on Content: (emphasis on basics to ensure performance in critical instructional areas	- Concentration on: • traditional basics, the 3 Rs • new basics, science, mathematics, computer skills - Scholarships for science and mathematics teachers - More required courses for college and vocational preparation - Funds for NSF and ED for science and mathematics education
5. Parental Choice: (parental control over what, where, and how their children learn)	- Tuition tax credits - Vouchers - Parental involvement in the schooling process - Parental involvement in determining curricular content
6. Character: (strengthening traditional values in schools)	- Discipline in the schools - Character education - School prayer - Work ethic

The Federal Educational Research Policy Agenda

Our thesis is that a form of "new federalism" in education policy is in the process of becoming institutionalized. There is a bipartisan consensus in support of a diminished federal role and an expanded state role in education. This trend will continue for the next five to fifteen years. The pattern of devolution will dominate educational policy development for the remainder of this century. Accompanying the governmental devolution will be progress on other aspects of the current dministration's agenda for procedural and substantive changes in education.

What do these recent shifts in federal education policy mean for educational research? In the remainder of this paper we will support two basic arguments:

1. The federal educational research policy agenda evolves from two complementary bases:
   a. The Stated Agenda, i.e., R&D emphases articulated by the Administration;
   b. The Derivative Agenda, i.e., emphases occasioned by non-R&D policy actions including overarching social policies, substantive educational interests, and the effects of federal policy shifts on policy development at the state and local levels.
2. The changes in the federal educational research agenda will have significant implications for both the educational research community and for the future of educational research.

The Stated Agenda

This Administration is clear and consistent in articulating its policy preferences - it issues agendas. Educational research policy is no exception. In his testimony before the House Subcommittee on Select Education, Chester E. Finn, Jr., Assistant Secretary for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), outlined in broad terms the federal role in research:

> The Federal government is uniquely equipped to support and encourage education research, data collection, and dissemination of knowledge about effective educational practices. The Federal government can economically and efficiently establish uniform procedures and definitions for statistical purposes. Likewise, the Federal government has a unique ability and interest in disseminating knowledge about successful educational practices. (Finn, 1986, February 19, p. 1).

And, Finn (1986, February 19) issued an agenda in which he specified the four top priorities of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI):

1. Census, i.e., repairing the nation's education data base;
2. Outcomes Assessment, i.e., enlarging our understanding of educational outcomes and quality by strengthening such activities as the National Assessment of Educational Progress;
3. Dissemination, i.e., improving efforts to disseminate useful,

reliable, and timely information to educators, policy makers, the public, and the media;

4. Replenishing the Knowledge Base, i.e., replenishing the intellectual capital of education through well-chosen programs of research into important issues.

Actions of and statements from ED provide evidence that these are, in fact, priorities of OERI.

1. Census. In the reorganization of ED, the Center for Statistics assumed the functions of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and also took over responsibility for monitoring the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Finn (1986, February 19, p. 6) testified:

> In the months ahead, the Center for Statistics will concentrate on the first of these priorities - repairing the data base.... We will provide the first comprehensive national data on student financial aid.... We will also expand the coverage of our postsecondary education statistics by doubling the number of postsecondary institutions we will survey -- from 8000 to 16,000. We call this program the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. It will play a key role in strengthening the data base.

Repairing the data base is an activity of massive proportions. Seventy (70) papers commissioned by ED reported the complaints of policy makers and analysts, state and local school administrators, and federal agencies and branches (Mirga, 1986, January 29). According to the report,

the data collected, maintained, and reported by the NCES lacked comprehensiveness (e.g., no information about student achievement, teachers, and school finance), integration (i.e., information composed of discrete and unrelated projects), accuracy (i.e., obvious errors in statistics), comparability, (i.e., data collected and aggregated in different ways), and representativeness, (i.e., minimal data available below the national level) (Lewis, 1986). Plisko, Ginsburg, and Chaikind (1986) assessed a partial listing of thirty-five education data bases and identified problems in data coverage, data quality, and data linkages and demonstrated inaccuracies, inconsistencies, limitations, and lack of cohesiveness.

To repair the data base, ED has developed a blueprint for improvement that will require (1) an ambitious, new, cognitive skills test for students and (2) unprecedented cooperation by schools, and by local and state education agencies (Hertling, 1986, April 2). The blueprint calls for the creation of the Elementary/Secondary Integrated Data System (ESIDS) which will include "comprehensive information about all of the major areas of the education system and data for analysis of relationships both within and across these areas" (Hertling, 1986, April 2, p. 15).

The ED plan has raised serious policy questions about (1) the possibility of a national test, (2) the role of state-level assessment activities, (3) potentially high levels of intervention in elementary and secondary education, and (4) protection from undue influence of political policy on classroom content (Lewis, 1986, p. 700).

2. Outcomes Assessment. Closely linked to the census function is emphasis on documenting and explicating educational outcomes and quality. This priority includes ED's longitudinal studies (National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972, High School and Beyond Study begun in 1982, and National Education Longitudinal Study to begin in 1988) as well as the strengthening of NAEP. NAEP, a congressionally mandated activity, is currently being carried out under contract by the Educational Testing Service.

Secretary Bennett has been critical of NAEP and a report prepared by the Center for Statistics recommended that NAEP should "emphasize content-area skills, improve the dissemination of its data, and make the information it gathers more relevant to policy makers" (ED Report, 1986, June 4, p. 2). The Assessment Policy Center of NAEP submitted a report, ("A Future for NAEP"), to ED in which it proposed that NAEP "collect comparable state-level data but only within 'very specific guidelines' and with deference to state desires (NAEP Board, 1986, June 11, p. 4). Concerns listed included "validity of comparisons that are made, quality control checks, security of exercises used, and lack of adverse impact on the ability to carry out regular NAEP" (NAEP Board, 1986, June 11, p. 4). The internal study also noted:

- NAEP data must be made more timely.
- NAEP officials should develop more instruments to assess students more completely.
- NAEP must assess the literacy of youths and other individuals who

are no longer in school and gauge the literacy needs of employers. (5, p. 4)

Governor Lamar Alexander (TN) chaired a 22 member task force that examined assessment issues generally and the role of the NAEP. The principal issue, according to Bennett, is the development of indicators of educational outcomes to facilitate state by state comparisons (Hertling, 1986, May 21). Finn (1986, Spring, p. 3) noted the priority of outcomes assessment:

> The second priority is still on the statistics side of the house: we must make more use of qualitative, outcomes, and assessment type of work to see what people are learning. Our best example here is NAEP...and I think there is a very deep thirst out there for such data at the elementary, secondary, and especially, the higher education level where it is almost completely non-existent.

3. Dissemination. In his testimony before the House Subcommittee on Select Education, Finn (1986, February 19, p. 2) noted:

> Our major inadequacy thus far has been an unsatisfactory record of disseminating understandable and useful research findings and data to a variety of audiences.... We are making a concerted effort to remedy that problem by concentrating the efforts of two divisions of the new OERI on serving the distinctive information needs of professionals, policy makers, and the lay public.

An example of the kind of dissemination effort proposed is What Works

(1986). In identifying the audience for that document Finn reported, "It is not particularly aimed at our usual association muckety-mucks. It's much more for school board members, your 3rd grade teachers, the parent of your 7th grader" (Hertling, 1986, March 12, p. 8). Bennett has also identified the audience for dissemination. In discussing What Works and similar efforts (e.g., Schools Without Drugs and others yet to come), Bennett noted that these documents are "directed at parents, teachers, and local decision makers and not national policy makers and education 'experts'. We're talking to the people we're supposed to be talking to" (Hertling, 1986, March 12, p. 10). And, he added, What Works reinforced the federal government's fundamental responsibility "to supply accurate and reliable information to the American people" (Hertling, 1986, p. 10). The purpose of an effective program of dissemination to the public was noted by Finn (1986, February 19, p. 8):

> I share Secretary Bennett's oft-stated conviction that the American people, equipped with reliable information, accurate data, and solid research findings, can be counted on to fix their own schools and post-secondary institutions.

4. Replenishing the Knowledge Base. The final stated agenda item of OERI is "replenishing the intellectual capital of education through well-chosen programs of research into important issues" (Finn, 1986, February 19, p. 6). The task of replenishing the knowledge base involves both the work of the labs and centers and non-institutional research support, i.e., targeted requests for proposals (RFPs) and unsolicited

grants programs. The first unsolicited grant program since 1980 was announced in the Federal Register on January 6, 1986. One-half million dollars were made available for research "that is both significant and potentially useful for the betterment of knowledge" about schools and colleges (Mirga, 1986, January 15, p.9). Finn noted that he "'would have a real problem' if the OERI continued to make primarily long term institutional grants" (Mirga, 1986, January 15, p. 9). The low priority of this agenda item is apparent in Finn's discussion of it :

> Let me say up front there's a considerable over-reliance on Washington here. Given that 93 cents of every education dollar comes from state and local sources, wouldn't you think that some state governments somewhere might maintain a research office to be proud of and put a pittance of its money into this kind of thing? I don't just mean data gathering - they do that, and they do testing - I mean research.... In the era of Gramm-Rudman it seems to me especially important for the research establishment to have more funding targets than just the federal government, especially the weensy, little Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (Finn 1986, Spring, p. 4)

In terms of OERI's research activities, Finn (1986, February 19, p. 6) stated:

> As I noted earlier, the Office of Research will be largely responsible for defining and implementing our research efforts. The Office will devote a large amount of its energies to

developing a solid and productive partnership with the centers as well as with other scholars and practitioners, to assure the optimal use of limited research funds. Moreover, the research staff is developing a planning and monitoring system that will identify high priority policy questions for all our research activities.

The Derivative Agenda

Federal educational research policy is dependent upon and derives from general social policy and educational policy preferences. The dominant social policy preferences are:

1. Diminution, i.e., reducing the federal budget and deficit;
2. Devolution, i.e., transferring responsibility for educational policy development to the state and local levels.

The educational policy preferences are:

3. Substantive interests of the Administration in modifying the form, structure, and content of education.

1. Diminution. Federal social policy in general, and the intersection of social and fiscal policies in particular, determine, to a large extent, federal educational research policy. Reduced federal expenditures for social programs is the domestic policy of this Administration. That means considerably fewer federal dollars will be available for which research in education can compete during the remainder of this century. In her testimony before the House Subcommittee on Select Education, Eleanor Chelimsky, Director of the Program and Methodology Division of the U.S.

General Accounting Office (GAO), clarified the relationship between budget reductions and information needs in education:

> There have been a number of legislative actions in recent years (such as the Deficit Reduction Act of 1984) intended to reduce the growth of the federal government. The recent Gramm-Rudman-Hollings legislation [now the Balanced Budget and Emergency Control Act of 1985, Public Law 99-177] has given these efforts increased emphasis. It is therefore reasonable to expect, on the one hand, that information production, like many other areas in the federal government, would be influenced by these cost containment and deficit-reduction activities. On the other hand it is also reasonable to expect that certain types of information - evaluations of programs or policy effectiveness, for example - could play a central role in deliberations about the deficit-reduction activities themselves. In the latter case...we might expect a continued support for the production of at least some information. (1986, pp. 2-3).

Educational research never had much in terms of financial resources. The relatively small federal educational research budget was whittled away prior to and during the first Reagan term. The GAO analysis indicated that NIE, NCES, and ED's Office of Planning, Budget, and Evaluation sustained massive reductions from 1973-1984:

> In 1973 NIE had current dollar obligations of roughly $107 million; by 1984 these resources had fallen to $58 million, a 45%

> decrease. When viewed in real terms...from 1973 to 1984, NIE experienced a 76 percent reduction in fiscal resources, despite the 22 percent increase in overall federal investment in education. (Chelimsky, 1986, p. 5)

Between 1980-1984, NCES experienced a 28% budget reduction, in real terms, a disproportionately higher level than the 8% reduction experienced by major federal statistical agencies (including NCES). The Office of Planning, Budget, and Evaluation reported a decline, in real terms, of 62% during the same four year period (Chelimsky, 1986, pp. 6-7).

Predictably, the GAO analysis (Chelimsky, 1986, pp., 10-14) determined that the reductions of the 1980-84 period were accompanied by changes in the type of activity:

- The Office of Planning, Budget, and Evaluation shifted from large scale evaluation studies to smaller issue analyses, position papers, and dissemination projects.
- NIE (excluding the work of the labs and centers) reduced research activities in teaching and learning (57%), education policy and organization (83%), and dissemination and improvement of practice (63%).
- NCES scaled back or eliminated data collection activities, reduced monitoring of data quality, and decreased sample sizes and frequency of data collection.

In summary:

> Our work on how the priorities of NIE were set and the many

> influences on this process is incomplete, but we can now note that the areas that have been affected the least by funding cuts - NAEP, ERIC, and the labs and centers - are those that have been protected by congressional requirements. The other side of this, of course, is that research activities outside these specific programs have been substantially reduced. Specifically, the overall number of awards outside these programs dropped from 422 in 1980 to 72 in 1984. (Chelimsky, 1986, p. 15)

Thus, the first Reagan term witnessed a decline in fiscal resources for educational research; a small investment became dramatically smaller. The Administration's budget request for FY 1987, however, represented a shift in priorities. While ED's overall requested budget of $15.2 billion was $3.2 billion less than the FY 1986 appropriation and $2.5 billion below the FY '86 Gramm-Rudman requirements, an increase for OERI was requested:

> In a major shift reflecting Bennett's priorities, the budget for research and statistics gathering would rise by more than $13 million, from $57 million to $70.2 million. Within that total according to Finn, assistant secretary for OERI, ED will ask Congress to earmark $24.8 million for the research office, a $2.8 million increase; $18.3 million for statistics gathering, a $5.5 million hike; $19.1 million for the programs for the improvement of practice office, a $900,000 increase; and $8 million for the information office, $1.4 million more than the current level. Explaining the increase, Bennett said research is a uniquely

federal role in education and "we simply can't do the research without the increase." The total OERI budget would fall from $179 million to the $70.2 million level because ED proposed to kill the public library aid programs now administered by the research office. (Hertling, 1986, February 12, p. 13)

The range and type of research programs, projects, and activities of OERI depend on the final budget decisions. The Administration's request was consistent with its stated agenda. And, the surprising shift in priorities was consistent with the Bennett/Finn position that educational research, as they define it, has some place in the federal role in education.

2. Devolution. The procedural social policy preference of the Reagan Administration is devolution. The implementation of this policy has stimulated education policy and program actions at the state level. This increased activity level sets the stage for the growth of support at the state level for some types of educational research and school improvement activities.

States are already initiating forms of educational census taking and outcomes assessment. The most significant activity of the past year was the approval by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) of a plan to conduct cross-state assessments of policies and educational progress of students and to report those findings annually beginning in 1987. The initial list of indicators of cross-state comparisons include three categories: educational outcomes, educational context, and

educational practices (Sirkin, 1985, p. 15).

Individually, thirty-seven states have approved statewide assessment programs (Changing Course, 1985, p. 11). The Illinois Education Reform and Finance Act of 1985 includes a provision for report cards for schools (Pipho, 1985, p. 101). In Massachusetts, the 1985 education reform legislation requires local school boards to provide extensive data to the state board which will make awards to schools for superior or improved performance (Pipho, 1985, p. 175). California implemented the first "accountability program" which reviews districts on a school-by-school basis relative to several categories of five year goals, i.e., enrollment, test scores, performance of the college bound, dropout and attendance rates, extracurricular programs, homework, and writing assignments (Changing Course, 1985, p. 13).

Many of the current state-level policy and program initiatives reinforce the traditional SEA roles of monitoring and certifying. But, some states, building upon earlier efforts, are already involved in complex patterns of school improvement. For example, Illinois passed a comprehensive reform act that includes forty-four education reforms including preschool programs, a mathematics/science academy, report cards for schools, regional centers for computer education and gifted children, and $211 million in new money for education in 1986 (Pipho, 1985). Despite funding problems, efforts in these areas are continuing (Sevener, 1986). The California School Improvement Program supports a comprehensive process that includes locally-developed improvement plans, school-wide planning,

broadly-based governance structures, outside peer review, and continuing staff development (Berman, 1984). Other states have initiated internship programs for teachers (e.g., Louisiana, Pennsylvania), beginning teacher assistance programs (e.g., Oklahoma), administrator academies (e.g., Missouri, South Carolina), and staff development programs (e.g., Kansas)(Changing Course, 1985).

The increased state-level school improvement activity will generate an increased interest in evaluation and research. Governors, legislatures, SEAs, and LEAs will be concerned about the design and implementation of educational innovations and whether these programs work, are cost-effective, and improve student outcomes.

3. Substantive Interests of the Administration. The substantive educatational policy preferences of the Reagan Administration noted in Table 3 include institutional competition, individual competition, performance standards, focus on content, parental choice and involvement in schooling, and character education (Clark and Astuto, 1986). OERI is now and will continue addressing those interests.

The popular ED publication What Works illustrates the influence of the agenda on the activities of OERI, in this case its focus on dissemination. The publication begins with citation of the evidence supporting the effect of the parents and the home on the education of children, "parents are their children's first and most influential teachers" (U.S. Department of Education, 1986, p. 7); moves on to the classroom where the first research finding again emphasizes parents, "parental involvement helps children

learn more effectively" (p. 19); emphasizes findings on basic skills, reading, writing, mathematics, science, study skills, and homework (pp. 21-42); and concludes with evidence on the characteristics of effective schools, e.g., school climate, discipline, rigorous courses (pp. 44-62). The point of this citation is not to criticize or to praise What Works. The publication simply emphasizes the Administration's interest in parental control of and involvement in their children's education, a focus on content and basic skills, character education, and performance standards. The research and dissemination investments of OERI will be consistent with those emphases.

In fact, there is an overlap between the interest in competition and standards and the earlier noted interests in the census and outcomes assessment functions of OERI. The National Assessment of Educational Progress and the growing interest in state-level assessment stimulate competition across schools, school types, and states and provide data for the establishment of minimum standards.

Evidence of the influence of the substantive interests of the Administration on the activities of OERI are manifold:

- In March, 1986 Secretary Bennett announced $2.5 million in grants to study choice and parental involvement, character, and content.
- The recent round of R&D centers funded by OERI included centers on: reading; writing; learning; student testing, evaluation and standards; educational technology; and, effective elementary and secondary schools.

- In May 1986 the Department announced the establishment of a joint task force with the National Academy of Education to examine assessment issues broadly and the role of the NAEP in assessment in particular.
- Additional volumes of What Works are in preparation.

Summary

The federal educational research agenda seems straightforward when the Assistant Secretary described it as:

- the census function,
- strengthened outcomes assessment,
- dissemination, and
- replenishing the knowledge base.

But that is not quite all that needs to be taken into consideration in understanding the agenda because the Assistant Secretary's stated agenda is impacted upon by broader policy issues of even greater interest to the Administration, i.e.:

- diminishing funds for educational R&D that place all the items on the agenda at risk and suggest that low priority agenda items will be impossible to pursue;
- continued efforts to transfer responsibility and initiative for educational policy and programs to the states - a move that will increase the significance of state-level interests in determining the national agenda for educational research; and
- a clear substantive policy agenda asserted by the Administration

that will determine what is to be emphasized in the process-focused agenda of the Assistant Secretary.

Implications for the Future of Educational Research

Research and statistics represent "the core and the clearest responsibility of the federal government in the field of education," according to Finn (Palmer, 1986, p. 16). The Administration's FY 1987 and FY 1988 budget proposals included an increase for OERI. Do these factors herald a new era of growth in educational research? The answer is unclear. Research is not at the top or the bottom of the priority list in education for either the Administration or Congress. Modest growth, or at least contained losses, seems possible. The more interesting question is the intra-field issue of gainers and losers. Which functions and topics in research and dissemination are likely to be emphasized? How will this affect the longer range configuration of knowledge production and use in education?

Despite a history of protecting certain research programs (i.e., R&D Labs and Centers, NAEP, ERIC), educational research is not a Congressional favorite. Note, for example, the following comments:

> At a hearing by the House Subcommittee on Select Education last week, the panel's chairman, Rep. Pat Williams, said education research 'is in a lot of trouble because of its past record. It's not on the front burner for the Budget Committee, the Appropriations Committee, or the U.S. Congress.' ... The panel's ranking Republican member, Rep. Steve Bartlett of Texas, said the

> requirement that the deficit be abolished meant that Congress must choose what programs deserve continued support because they are top national priorities. Mr. Bartlett speculated that many lawmakers would be inclined to preserve programs that aid handicapped and disadvantaged children as well as financial aid to college students, but would choose to eliminate programs that they view as less critical, such as those that support education research. 'It's now a zero-sum game,' said Mr. Bartlett. 'Money provided for research comes out of dollars for other education programs.' (Palmer, 1986, p. 16)

Despite what appears to be an increase in the priority for educational research within ED, fiscal support will in all likelihood continue at a low level. Given the dominant federal policy preference to reduce federal spending, the continuing issue is what will be cut the most.

Gainers

Where are the big winners? We see three at the federal level, i.e., the census function, outcomes assessment, and dissemination.

The Census Function. This is not only Finn's top priority for OERI, it is the least contested area of federal involvement in education. Individual states are not in a position to collect national-level data. And although criticisms have been leveled against the current and past efforts of NCES, statistics gathering is an ordinary and highly respected function at the federal level. This is primarily an in-house function of OERI.

Outcomes Assessment. Reporting on the "condition of education" has Congressional support, is high on the OERI agenda, fits the substantive interests of the Administration, and is already being sponsored as a state-level activity. Outcomes assessment fits the push for increased performance standards and provides information to foster both institutional and individual competition, e.g., comparisons between public and private schools or heightened classroom focus on student achievement as measured by standardized tests. State-level interest, as evidenced by the initiatives of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association reinforces the priority status of outcomes assessment.

However, in contrast with the census function, dissensus among the involved groups will emerge as the specifics of the assessment are made clear. For example:

> Mr. Finn predicted that 'fairly simple test scores of one kind or another are what will be used, rightly or wrongly, to see whether American education is getting better or worse.' 'The public is going to want fairly simple barometers and is going to get them,' he said, 'just as it does for the state of the economy or the state of the weather. That's to be taken for granted and worked with, not to be fought against.' But Mr. Hartman [CCSSO] retorted: 'No one is going to work their tail off just to get Checker [Finn] his one figure. Most of us believe life is more complicated than that, and one figure can be misleading. We all object to that, and I don't think we would cooperate if that's

all they were after.' (Olson, 1986, p.14)

In all likelihood competitive barometers will be designed and marketed. OERI will operate an assessment through stringently crafted requests for proposals. The chief state school officers will work with ED but will also provide comparative data that better fit their diverse policy needs. Professionals in the educational R&D community will be involved heavily in the strategies, tactics, and technology of educational outcomes assessment.

Dissemination. The Department is committed to an emphasis on dissemination but the commitment is focused on one way communication to a broad audience. Secretary Bennett's comments in the foreword to What Works reflect the Department's dissemination concerns:

> Unlike many government reports, this report is addressed to the American people. It is intended to provide accurate and reliable information about what works in the education of our children, and it is meant to be useful to all of us - parents and taxpayers, teachers and legislators, newspaper reporters and newspaper readers, principals and school board members. But, first and foremost, this book is intended to be useful to the adult with a child - or grandchild, niece, stepchild, neighbor - in school or soon to enter school. It is designed to assist the adult who cares about the education of that child, both at home and in school. (U.S. Department of Education, p. v)

This emphasis is likely to result in either in-house activity or

targeted requests for proposals that are monitored carefully by ED.

Gainers and Losers

Two types of R&D activity, evaluation and school improvement, will lose at the federal level and gain at the state level. The withdrawal of the Department from complicated educational program interventions and the success of the block grant reduce sharply the need for ED to pursue the high level of evaluation activity characteristic of the pre-1980 era. In contrast, SEAs suddenly find themselves seeking evaluative feedback on the multiple education initiatives of their state legislatures and governor's offices as well as programs supported by the block grant funds.

The picture is similar in school improvement. Vestiges of the federal investment in school improvement still exist in the regional educational laboratories and the National Diffusion Network (NDN) but the major expenditures on school improvement programs from the federal level are a bygone period for education. In their stead are new and expanding school improvement programs at the state level. The issue for those interested in state-based school improvement programs will be confronted when the cost of these efforts becomes clear. In periods of budgetary stringency at the state level, it will be difficult to sustain expenditures for improvement efforts while maintenance programs suffer cutbacks.

Overall it is impossible to determine what the scope of gain or loss will be in these two areas. However, it does seem clear that the results of the work in the two areas will be less visible, and probably less easily accessible to professionals in research and evaluation, since the targets

for the work will be restricted geographically. There is less likelihood, for example, that an evaluation project at the state level will assume the importance of the study of the change process that characterized the evaluation of NDN, i.e., "The Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement."

Losers

Our guess is that the losers in the competition for funds will turn out to be basic and applied research support and the support of institutional structures in R&D and school improvement, i.e., the programs of the regional educational laboratories and R&D centers.

Basic and Applied Research. The big loser in the stated agenda of the Assistant Secretary will probably be "replenishing the knowledge base." The current emphasis is tied almost entirely to the funded R&D centers. The unsolicited grants program is at about the same funding level as it was when PL 531, the Cooperative Research Program, was first funded in 1956. That year Congress appropriated $1.0 million dollars for unsolicited proposals but required that two-thirds of the funds be spent on research on mental retardation. This year the unsolicited grant program is funded at $500,000. The Assistant Secretary is clear that the production of new knowledge was not listed fourth among his priorities by accident:

> We are working very hard at OERI on trying to take new knowledge that has been gleaned over the decades and put it together in various forms that make it more accessible, intelligible, and useful to people. The production of new research knowledge is,

in fact, fourth among my four top priorities. (Finn, 1986, Spring, p. 3)

Finn's opinion of the educational research community provides more evidence that it is likely to be a loser:

> As for the educational research establishment - it would be nice to be diplomatic about this - first of all, the number of really first-rate intellects in it is small. They do exist, but you can count the really first-rate intellects in the field in the dozens, not in the hundreds, and certainly not in the thousands. We don't now have on the whole a dazzling array of intellectual fire-powers. Second point: the enterprise itself has never quite gotten into that lovely cycle of success breeding enthusiasm breeding investment, breeding more people wanting to come into the field, breeding trainable people ... because you're on a roll. I don't think the educational research community has every been on a roll. And so instead of a success cycle, it's had kind of a flat or steady descent. I'm inclined to say it's been a steady decay. (Finn, 1986, Spring, p. 4)

The near-future funding of basic and applied research is also constrained by the Administration's explicit substantive agenda in education. It seems unlikely that OERI will expend limited funds on an open, competitive basis when the Department is anxious to focus its research, school improvement, and dissemination efforts in a half dozen areas.

Regional Laboratories and R&D Centers. Historically the lab and center program of the Department and its predecessor, the United States Office of Education, has survived by its base of Congressional support, not because of its popularity in the executive branch. Successive commissioners and secretaries of education have looked covetously at the funds invested in these institutions and imagined how they might be employed at the secretary's discretion. The current Administration is no exception. The lukewarm attitude of OERI toward the regional laboratories was expressed by Finn at the moment of their greatest triumph, i.e., the announcement of awards of $56 million to six labs:

> A number of outside reviewers who examined the laboratory proposals noted that they were not so strong as had been hoped... Some lacked a clear vision of the nature and role of a regional laboratory; some lacked coherence in their plans and structures; some lacked precision or clarity of expression. Mr. Finn noted that his agency would be 'imaginative, energetic, and demanding' in its monitoring of the laboratories' performance. (Mirga, 1985, August 21, p. 14)

The recompetition of the R&D centers was delayed for a three month period to allow the Secretary to appoint a committee to review the priorities that had been included in the original request for proposals. The changes in the competition resulting from the delay were minor but it seems likely that the emphases in the RFP would have been considerably more precise if the Secretary and his team had been in place before the

recompetition began. In fact, tighter control seems almost certain now that ED has announced the use of a "cooperative agreement" rather than a grant in the competition for a new R&D center on reading. The cooperative agreement allows the Department to become involved directly in developing and modifying the research agenda of the center.

The political viability of the labs and centers decreases as the investment in them, which Congress has fought to save harmless, becomes a larger percentage of the decreasing OERI budget. If they continue to maintain Congressional support, as they did this past year, they still will have a difficult time retaining sufficient autonomy in programs to maintain a credible position in the research community.

Predicted Effects on Educational Research

If the preceding analysis of the implications of changes in federal educational policy on educational research is accurate - and if the changes persist over a number of years as we think they will - there will be some discernible effects on educational R&D. We would predict:

- An erosion of the knowledge base will occur. Support of basic and applied studies cannot be postponed with impunity. Knowledge of what works will begin to dry up.

- The capacity of the educational research community will diminish. Institutional and individual support at a national level is needed to attain Finn's "cycle of success."

- The inventiveness and creativity of the field will be reduced by the control pattern favored currently by OERI. All administrations have

substantive agendas. This Administration's agenda is too precise. The priority placed upon in-house activities, tightly framed RFPs, and "cooperative agreements" will enhance control and impede empowerment - a bad trade-off for a research community.

- The simplified definition of school improvement that relies heavily on the manipulation of standards, assessment of outcomes, and dissemination of what works will result over time in a stalled, incestuous pattern of school improvement efforts. The current OERI agenda for school improvement is based on an over-rationalized picture of how American school systems operate. The capacity for school improvement through local education agency self-help and external technical assistance will decline.

- The interaction between the educational research community and state-level policy makers and planners will increase markedly and will serve as the point of origin for creative responses to school problems. The states will tire of relying on manipulating standards and exhortation to achieve school improvement and will work with local education agencies and colleges and universities to create more inventive programs of improvement.

- Networks of SEAs, LEAs, and colleges and universities will grow in number and sophistication to enhance local school improvement efforts.

Research, development, evaluation, and school improvement in education are in for some bleak days. Money is scarce. The leadership at the federal level has too many answers and too few questions about how to improve schools. The excellence movement is fostering an oversimplified

picture of how schools and classrooms change and can improve. No constituency has much confidence in educational researchers to contribute to the solution of education's problems.

Only wishful thinking can lead to the conclusion that the short range (5-15 years) future of educational research in the United States is promising. Wishful thinking was not our assignment.

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